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## RELIGION AND LANGUAGE IN DURA-EUROPOS<sup>1</sup>

Dura-Europos was rich in gods and rich in languages. The unique religious and linguistic situation of this fortress town on the Middle Euphrates reflected its vicissitudes. Founded as the Macedonian colony Europos on a plateau overlooking the river, Dura was under Parthian control (with a brief Roman interlude in AD 116/7) from the late-second century BC until AD 165. Lucius Verus' campaigns brought in the Roman troops who, nearly a century later, would be defeated by the Sasanians in AD 256. Throughout most of the Parthian and Roman phases a large Palmyrene contingent was to be found in the town too. The now legendary excavations from the 1920s and 1930s by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres revealed a wide spectrum of pagan cults, coming from different spheres of influence, in addition to a synagogue (famous because of its unique murals, with their illustrations of scenes from the Hebrew Scriptures) and a Christian house church. Graffiti and inscriptions, as well as the remains of writing on more perishable material, show an even more remarkable diversity of languages and dialects in use, with the Classical languages supplemented by Aramaic (including Palmyrenean,<sup>2</sup> Hatrean and Syriac), Hebrew, Parthian and Middle-Persian, and the proto-Arabic dialect known as Safaitic. Though not one of the grand Levantine cities, Dura-Europos was no marginal outpost either,<sup>3</sup> and the abundance of archaeological findings makes it potentially our best case study for social and religious life in a normal Near Eastern small town under the early and high empire. So far, however, neither the religious life nor the language situation has received the attention that has long been due. The only comprehensive account of Dura's cults is an article by Bradford Welles from

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<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to Lucinda Dirven for her critical comments on a draft of this paper, and to Hannah Cotton for asking me to contribute to this volume and subsequently showing so much patience. All remaining errors are of course mine. Abbreviations:

DEÉ P. Leriche e.a. (eds.), *Doura-Europos. Études I-III in Syria* (1986-92), IV (Beirut, 1997)

PAT D.R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore and London, 1996)

Rep. M. Rostovtzeff e.a. (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Reports I-IX* (New Haven, 1929-1952)

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that 'Palmyrenean' is used for the language and 'Palmyrene' as a general adjective. Similarly 'Hatrean' vs 'Hatrene'. Following J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden, 1995), p.xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Rightly emphasized by M. Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze: Palmyra - Edessa - Dura-Europos - Hatra. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Pompeius bis Diocletian* (Stuttgart, 2005), p.331: "kein marginaler Außenposten."

1969,<sup>4</sup> and although the parchments and papyri were collected in what swiftly became a classic volume,<sup>5</sup> the final report on the inscriptions never appeared.<sup>6</sup>

A contribution of this size can of course not pretend to fill the gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of all the relevant material, and its more modest aim is to explore the relationship between the variety of cults and the spread of Classical and non-Classical languages. In particular, this paper investigates to what degree the adherence to different cults and use of different languages at Dura-Europos actually led to a so-called ‘mixed culture’, which has often been assumed since the days of Franz Cumont and Michael Rostovtzeff, the scientific directors of the French-American expeditions.

An accessible introduction to the linguistic variety at Dura and its relation to at least some aspects of religious life was provided over forty years ago by George Kilpatrick, although he concentrated on the Jewish and Christian evidence.<sup>7</sup> Kilpatrick argued that the Durene Jews had strong links with those in Mesopotamia, while, in contrast, the local Christian community originated in the West. Apart from a liturgical text written in Hebrew (on a parchment), the available textual sources from the synagogue consist of inscriptions and graffiti, which are more or less evenly divided in Aramaic (22), Greek (19) and Persian (12 Middle Persian, ‘Pārsīk’, and 3 Parthian, ‘Pahlavīk’).<sup>8</sup> Most of the Persian ones were written on the wall paintings themselves and record appraisal on the part of visitors from elsewhere. Their presence can be explained by assuming that Mesopotamian Jews had sent someone “like a consular representative nowadays” to the Euphrates stronghold, in order to approve of the frescos.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> C.B. Welles, ‘The gods of Dura-Europos’ in R. Stiehl and H.E. Stier (eds.), *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben, FS F. Altheim II* (Berlin, 1969), p.50-65.

<sup>5</sup> C.B. Welles, R.O. Fink and J.F. Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report V.1* (New Haven, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> See, however, the large collection of material by R.N. Frye, J.F. Gilliam, H. Ingholt and C.B. Welles, ‘Inscriptions from Dura-Europos’ in *Yale Classical Studies* 14 (1955), p.123-213.

<sup>7</sup> G.D. Kilpatrick, ‘Dura-Europos: the parchments and the papyri’ in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 5 (1964), p.215-25.

<sup>8</sup> C.H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report 8.1* (New Haven, 1956), p.261-320. For the Hebrew parchment, see Welles, Fink and Gilliam, o.c. [n.5], n°11.

<sup>9</sup> The quotation is from Kilpatrick, o.c. [n.7], p.220. For the Iranian material, see the collection of photographs by R.N. Frye (ed.), *The Parthian and Middle Persian Inscriptions of Dura-Europos. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Part III: Pahlavi Inscriptions; Vol. III: Dura-Europos; Portfolio I* (London, 1968), with the review article by C.J. Brunner, ‘The Iranian epigraphic remains from Dura-Europos’ in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92 (1972), p.492-7.

As regards the Durene Christians, their house church with baptistery was partly decorated with frescos too, showing stories from both the New and the Old Testament, and contained Greek graffiti and inscriptions. A single graffito from the courtyard, written in Syriac, seems to be the exception that proves the rule.<sup>10</sup> It concerns an ABC in the Estrangela script, and as such fits in well with five other alphabets (all in Greek) which were found in the Christian building.<sup>11</sup> Such texts are generally explained as warding off the evil eye, a phenomenon also encountered in a number of the pagan sanctuaries in the city, and indeed in some secular buildings.<sup>12</sup> The single Syriac graffito led Fergus Millar to state that “it is enough to suggest that, in a Christian context as in others, third-century Dura was a meeting-point of Greek and Syriac.” In support of this, he also pointed out that the Greek spelling of the names of David (Δαουίδ) and Goliath (Γολιθ), in the labels identifying the couple on one of the murals, is a reflection of their “spelling found in Syriac bibles”.<sup>13</sup> A Syriac inscription found elsewhere, in the temple of Atargatis, has sometimes been connected with the Christian community too. Written in a script that preceded Estrangela, it asks for a man with an indigenous name (‘Khalīṣa, son of Sennaq, of Qarha, a disciple of Rama’) to be ‘remembered before (the) god’ (*dkyr qdm ’lh*).<sup>14</sup> Although the original editor argued that the nomenclature pointed to a Christian context, it remains uncertain whether this anonymous god must necessarily be a reference to the Christian one. The fact that it was inscribed on a stele with abstract lunar and solar

<sup>10</sup> C.H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report 8.2* (New Haven, 1967), p.91, n°3. In a non-religious context, Syriac is also used in a parchment of a deed of sale composed in Edessa but found at Dura-Europos, and in two parchments from the otherwise Greek archive originating from the Middle Euphrates region. For these texts, see now H.J.W. Drijvers and J.F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene. Texts, Translations, and Commentary* (Leiden, 1999), p.232-48.

<sup>11</sup> Kraeling, o.c. [n.10], n°s 1,4,5,6,11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.89-90. Cf. F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos 1922-1923* (Paris, 1926), p.119-20. Alphabets in Greek have been found in the so-called temple ‘of the Palmyrene gods’ (on the border of the fresco of Julius Terentius), in the temple ‘of the Gadde’ and in the temple ‘of Azzanathkona’. The latter site has also revealed two Latin alphabets.

<sup>13</sup> F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC - AD 337* (Cambridge, MA - London, 1993), p.471. Cf. Kraeling, o.c. [n.10], pl.XXII and pl.XLI.1-2. For the inscriptions, see ibid., p.97, n°19 (Δαουίδ: “one of the common transcriptions of the Hebrew name”) and n°20 (Γολιθ: “neither an attested or correct transcription of the Hebrew name”).

<sup>14</sup> C.C. Torrey in *Rep. III*, p.68-71, with pl.XIX.1. Note that Torrey does not give the provenance of the stele, which can be learned only from M. Pillet in the same volume, p.10. The stele stood in front of an altar dedicated to Atargatis. For the text, see now also Drijvers and Healey, o.c. [n.10], p.191-2.

symbolism, found in a pagan shrine, does not make the case any stronger.<sup>15</sup> In any case, the notion that, generally speaking, Greek was the main language used by the Durene Christians, is confirmed by a small fragment of parchment, which has evoked plenty of discussion since its discovery in 1933. The parchment contains fifteen lines of a gospel harmony, which is usually interpreted as the oldest available text of Tatian's *Diatessaron*, although recently a plea has been made to understand the fragment as part of a separate gospel harmony, independent of that of Tatian.<sup>16</sup>

As far as the pagan cults are concerned, the linguistic situation at Dura-Europos is more clear-cut than the attestation of multifarious languages and dialects seems to imply. Firstly, Greek inscriptions and graffiti are predominant, also in those sanctuaries dedicated – or at least assigned by modern scholars – to deities with non-Classical names, such as the temples 'of Atargatis' and 'of Aphlad'.<sup>17</sup> The Greek language itself has hardly received discussion, although it is clear that a number of random peculiarities and of course mistakes had permeated through the texts, not surprisingly given its apparent use by all sections of the city's society.<sup>18</sup> To speak of a specific local, 'Durene' dialect, however, is probably an exaggeration.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, Palmyrenean-Aramaic is used (often alongside Greek) in those sacred places frequented by Palmyrenes. And thirdly, Latin is, naturally, attested in shrines which were either built or taken over by Roman soldiers. Any other languages which may occasionally have been used in religious contexts, such as Hatrean-Aramaic, for example in a bilingual inscription from the temple of Atargatis

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kilpatrick, o.c. [n.7], p.221; Millar, o.c. [n.13], p.468.

<sup>16</sup> Original publication: C.H. Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian's Diatessaron from Dura* (London, 1935). Cf. Welles, Fink and Gilliam, o.c. [n.5], n°10. Independent gospel harmony: D.C. Parker, D.G.K. Taylor and M.S. Goodacre, 'The Dura-Europos gospel harmony' in D.G.K. Taylor (ed.), *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts* (Birmingham, 1999), p.192-228. Most recent defence of Tatian's text, with further references to the debate on the parchment: J. Joosten, 'The Dura parchment and the Diatessaron' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003), p.159-75.

<sup>17</sup> Noted e.g. by Kilpatrick, o.c. [n.7], p.217; Millar, o.c. [n.13], p.448-9.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Cumont, o.c. [n.12], p.340: "de nombreux graffites griffonnés sur les murs prouvent que son usage, avec la connaissance de l'écriture, avait pénétré jusque dans les classes populaires."

<sup>19</sup> Greek language issues have been discussed by A. Kotsevalov, 'The Dura-Europos Greek and Macedonian' in *Linguistics* 35 (1967), p.28-34, who saw the preservation of Macedonian and Thessalian dialectal forms in the *Koine* spoken at Dura. Contra R. Schmitt, 'Die Ostgrenze von Armenien über Mesopotamien, Syrien bis Arabien' in G. Neumann and J. Untermann (eds.), *Die Sprachen im römischen Reich der Kaiserzeit* (Cologne - Bonn, 1980), p.187-214, who argued at p.198 n.56 that "sehr Verschiedenartiges und –wertiges" should not be "allzu rasch als 'dialektal' abgestempelt worden." Schmitt also remarked on the erroneous language of the Greek graffiti and "ihren Soloikismen."

recording a financial gift to the sun god Shamash (*šmš 'lh* /Θεῶ Ἡλίου),<sup>20</sup> are mere exceptions proving the rule.

Dura's history is commonly divided into a Parthian and a Roman phase, and many of the excavated sanctuaries and shrines originate in the Parthian one. However, as has recently been pointed out, the lack of any substantial use of Pahlavīk, even as regards graffiti, in the period before the city passed under Roman domination, and the simultaneous absence of any Semitic language save Palmyrenean,<sup>21</sup> help to create the impression that in the Parthian period "Dura remained in a real sense a Greek city"<sup>22</sup>, even if the administration of the Arsacid rulers was made very visible in documents from this phase.<sup>23</sup> Taking into account the general tolerance in the sphere of religion on the part of the Parthian overlords in their realm, it can of course hardly be called a surprise that there was "in Dura Europos keine gezielte Religionspolitik der Parther."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, if the period of Roman control unlatched the gates of the city to more new cultural and especially religious elements, the above-noted scheme, of general dominance of Greek in public inscriptions and the attestation – in its own context – of Palmyrenean as the only other widely used public language, remains unchanged. The one obvious modification is that Latin came to join the linguistic ranks, although almost solely within the military sphere. To what degree the latter was, or could be, used in daily life, in a town which was publicly Greek while many of its inhabitants used an Aramaic dialect colloquially, is anyone's guess. But a fragmentary graffito from a military shrine in the northeastern part of the town, near the river, shows sufficient sophistication to argue that at least some soldiers knew Latin really well.<sup>25</sup> Aramaic, as opposed to its Palmyrenean dialect, started

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<sup>20</sup> Interpreted as Palmyrenean instead by Frye e.a., o.c. [n.6], p.131-7, n°3, followed by *PAT* 2831. But see R. Bertolino, 'Les inscriptions hatréennes de Doura-Europos: étude épigraphique' in *DEÉ* IV, p.203-5, with fig.4.

<sup>21</sup> The Safaitic graffiti, scratched mainly on the so-called 'Palmyrene gate', are possibly to be dated to the Parthian period too, as Millar, o.c. [n.13], p.451, suggested. From their most recent and detailed treatment, however, it is unclear how they could be dated securely at all. See M. Macdonald, 'The Safaitic inscriptions at Dura Europos' in E. Cussini (ed.), *A Journey to Palmyra. Collected Essays to Remember Delbert R. Hillers* (Leiden - Boston, 2005), p.118-29.

<sup>22</sup> F. Millar, 'Dura-Europos under Parthian rule' in J. Wiesehöfer (ed.), *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse* (Stuttgart, 1998), p.478. For the best introduction to Parthian and Roman Dura, see id., o.c. [n.13], 12.2 and 12.4.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. the dating after 'the king of kings' in Welles, Fink and Gilliam, o.c. [n.5], n°18-20 and 22.

<sup>24</sup> Thus the rather banal remark by H. Scholten, 'Akkulturationsprozesse in der Euphrat-Region am Beispiel der griechisch-makedonischen Siedlung Dura Europos' in *Historia* 54 (2005), p.18-36, at p.35.

<sup>25</sup> Frye e.a., o.c. [n.6], n°15.

to appear in the Roman period too, but not related to pagan cults. Most notably, it was used in a building inscription from the synagogue, ca eleven years prior to the city's capture by the Sasanians.<sup>26</sup> Despite its absence in the epigraphic language of the multifarious cults, the potential relevance of Aramaic in the vernacular of pagan religious contexts is hinted at in a Greek inscription from the so-called 'House of Lysias', which records how, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the month Dios in the year 471 (November, AD 159), Lysias had gone εἰς Βηθειλάαν, using a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic *bt 'lh(y)*, 'house of the god(s)', or just 'temple'.<sup>27</sup> Since it is unlikely to have meant any of the Durene shrines (neither of which was particularly distinctive to merit being singled out as 'the' temple), it is more plausible that Lysias set out to visit one of the larger cult centres in the wider region. He could, for example, have left for Hatra, in northern Mesopotamia, where the large temenos, which contains a number of temples dedicated to various gods, was explicitly called *byt 'lh'*, the 'house of the gods', in a Hatrean inscription from AD 138, which records how lord Nasru, father of the later king Sanatruq, had built the walls and gate of the temenos.<sup>28</sup> Alternatively, it could be the case that Βηθειλαα was just a place name, as the original editors of the inscription suggested.<sup>29</sup> In any case, the evidence for the use of Aramaic in the pagan cults at Dura is, to say the least, rather thin.

In basically all Durene sanctuaries, whether they were built and dominated by Palmyrenes, by Roman soldiers (some of whom were of course Palmyrenes), by descendants of the original Macedonian settlers, or by the indigenous population, cultic practice took place along similar lines, with individuals dedicating sacrifices, altars or parts of buildings to their deities. For many shrines our evidence is, unfortunately, too limited to generalize. The temple of Zeus Theos, for example, has revealed only a few inscriptions from the Parthian period, of which the main one, from AD 120/1, records the dedication of 'the temple and the gates and all the painting of the images' (τὸν ναὸν καὶ τὰ θυρώματα καὶ τὴν τῶν εἰκόνων γραφήν πᾶσαν) to Zeus Theos (Διὶ Θεῶι) by

<sup>26</sup> Kraeling, o.c. [n.8], p.261ff.

<sup>27</sup> Frye e.a., o.c. [n.6], n°16A.

<sup>28</sup> Hatra inscription n°272, on which most recently K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien* (Göttingen, 1998), *ad loc.*

<sup>29</sup> Frye e.a., o.c. [n.6], in the appendix at p.205-6. Note that the companion inscription, n°16B, reveals that Lysias died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Dios, i.e. fifteen days after his original departure date. Unfortunately, the text does not provide any answer with regard to the location, or nature, of the *Bètheilaa* for which he left.

a certain Seleukos son of Theomnèstos son of Antiochos, who identified himself as Ἐυρωπαῖος καὶ τῶν πρώτων; another one from AD 114 is by the same dedicant; and a third one from AD 113/4 has the name of Zeus in the genitive on an altar.<sup>30</sup> These dated records help to decide when the shrine was initially built or completed and through whose generosity, but we are left in the dark about the further history of the cult practised inside the temple. In particular, the evidence is not sufficient to interpret it as a sanctuary used only by a particular subgroup of society, be it shaped by familial, geographical or occupational links. In four of the subsidiary rooms ovens for the preparation of food have been found, but this does not necessarily limit the temple's supposed clientele.<sup>31</sup> Zeus Theos does not stand on his own in this regard: there is abundant evidence for gods who did not inhabit the Classical pantheon, but whose cult patterns conformed to the general model of religious culture and behaviour in the Greek cities of the Roman East. Thus, the cult of Aphlad focused on a relief of a deity in cuirass, standing on top of two griffons, with a priestly figure burning incense in front of him, and with a Greek inscription identifying Aphlad as the god of Anath, a village on the Euphrates.<sup>32</sup> But the dedicant, who, like his god, also had a non-Classical name (Hadadiabos son of Zabdibolos son of Sillos), is said to have made the relief 'as a vow, for his own salvation and that of his children and of his whole house' (εὐχὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τέκνων καὶ τοῦ πάντος οἴκου), applying standard Graeco-Roman formulaic language to the worship of Aphlad.<sup>33</sup> Another inscription from the same temple gives a list of names of members of an association who record the erection of an ἀνδρών, a banqueting hall, dedicated to Aphlad,<sup>34</sup> thus providing a setting well known in the Greek East for sacred dining and drinking under the auspices of a deity. The fact that the divine name is spelt differently in the texts from the sanctuary (Ἀφλαδ; Ἀφαλαδος; Ἀπαλαδος) clearly reflects that it originated in a different language group and a different cultural sphere of

<sup>30</sup> *Rep.* VII/VIII, n<sup>o</sup>886-8.

<sup>31</sup> S.B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture. Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton, 1988), p.128.

<sup>32</sup> *Rep.* V, p.106ff with pl.XIII. The inscription is *ibid.*, p.112, n<sup>o</sup>416. The etymology of the divine name has been explained as Akkadian *aplu*, 'son', and Adda, meaning 'son of Hadad', which fits nicely with an old-Assyrian text that connected the son of Hadad with the Middle Euphrates region. See *ibid.*, p.118.

<sup>33</sup> On the formula, see now J. Moralee, 'For Salvation's Sake.' *Provincial Loyalty, Personal Religion, and Epigraphic Production in the Roman and Late Antique Near East* (New York - London, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> *Rep.* V, p.114, n<sup>o</sup>418, dated to AD 54.



influence. However, at Dura-Europos those adhering to the cult of Aphlad did so in Greek, and later Graeco-Roman fashion.

The only substantial group within Durene society which can be followed, at least partly, while playing its role simultaneously on different religious levels within that same society, is that of the Palmyrenes.<sup>35</sup> The beginning of their story coincides with the earliest dated written evidence from the site: an inscription from the so-called necropolis temple, situated ca 350m outside the city walls, records in Palmyrenean the dedication of a shrine to Bel and Yarhibol.<sup>36</sup> It remains unclear who these particular Palmyrene worshippers were, but it is well known that citizens of the Syrian oasis were based at Dura both as merchants and as archers on behalf of their mother city.<sup>37</sup> Palmyrene troops, in whatever capacity, were based at Dura-Europos early on, and seem to have remained there when the period of Roman domination began. It is not until the early third century, however, that we have evidence for the more official *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, which came to form part of the regular garrison of imperial forces at the city, including other auxiliary units and also vexillations of legions stationed elsewhere in the Near East, such as the *IV Scythica* and *XVI Flavia Firma*, whose headquarters were in northern Syria, at Zeugma and Samosata respectively.<sup>38</sup> It is the *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum* which has left us the splendid archive of military papyri in Latin, including of course the rightly famous *Feriale Duranum*, a sacrificial calendar recording a combination of imperial anniversaries and festivities with regard to deities from the Roman state cult.<sup>39</sup> This calendar would, in itself, never have been sufficient to inform us that the cohort using it was filled with soldiers from nearby Palmyra, and that they continued to pay homage to their ancestral gods at the same time. External evidence, however, leaves no doubt about this. From the so-called temple of the Palmyrene gods, which was frequented by soldiers

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<sup>35</sup> See, above all, the monograph by L. Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos. A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> PAT 1067.

<sup>37</sup> Most recently, A. Luther, 'Dura-Europos zwischen Palmyra und den Parthern. Der politische Status der Region am Mittleren Euphrat im 2. Jh. n. Chr. und die Organisation des palmyrenischen Fernhandels' in R. Rollinger and C. Ulf (eds.), *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World: Means of Transmission and Cultural Interaction* (Stuttgart, 2004), p.327-51.

<sup>38</sup> For all details concerning the period up to the third century, see A. Gebhardt, *Imperiale Politik und provinzielle Entwicklung. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Kaiser, Heer und Städten im Syrien der vorseverischen Zeit* (Berlin, 2002), esp. p.287-91.

<sup>39</sup> Welles, Fink and Gilliam, o.c. [n.5], n°54.

in its later phases, comes a Greek inscription which meticulously describes how the statues of the typically Palmyrene duo Yarhibol and Aglibol ought to be dressed and decorated.<sup>40</sup> And from the same site comes the famous fresco of the sacrifice by Iulius Terentius, tribune of the *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, leading his soldiers in a sacrifice to three Palmyrene deities, probably Aglibol, Yarhibol and Arsu.<sup>41</sup> But they could also be involved in worship which was neither Roman nor Palmyrene nor indigenous: it is likely that some of them participated in the cult of Mithras, which arrived at Dura-Europos with the Roman army. Although most texts from the mithraeum are in Greek or Latin, there is one bilingual Palmyrenean-Greek inscription which is a ‘good memorial’ (*dkrn t□b*) set up in AD 168/9 by the strategos (*’st□rt□g*) Etpani, ‘who is in command of the archers who are at Dura’ (*dy ’l qšt□ ’ dy bdwr*). The Greek text only names the commander (Ἐθφανεὶ ἰσταρτήγα). It is inscribed on the plinth of the elder of two reliefs (from AD 168-9) depicting the *tauroctony*, Mithras’ slaying of the bull. Equally, at least two of the dedicants of the relief from a few years later (AD 170-1), who are identified by Greek inscriptions, have names which were very common in Palmyra. The military element in the cult of Mithras at Dura was still going strong in the third century, but – although it is very likely - it cannot be certain that those involved in the later phases were from Palmyra too.<sup>42</sup>

Palmyrenes at Dura-Europos, as elsewhere in the Roman world, are recognizable to us through their own local Aramaic dialect with its distinctive script, and also through the worship of typically Palmyrene gods. In addition, we are able to follow some of their religious activities in their specific capacity as Roman soldiers, because we happen to know that the *Feriale Duranum* was used by the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*. There is, on the other hand, of course no means which would allow us to assess the cultic behaviour of those Palmyrenes who recorded their dedications to non-Palmyrene gods in Greek inscriptions. But that does not mean that such interaction did not take place.<sup>43</sup> We know from elsewhere

<sup>40</sup> Cumont, o.c. [n.12], n°12, with Dirven, o.c. [n.35], p.311-3.

<sup>41</sup> Cumont, o.c. [n.12], p.89-114 with pl.XLIX-LI. Cf. T. Kaizer, ‘A note on the fresco of Iulius Terentius from Dura-Europos’ in R. Rollinger and B. Truschnegg (eds.), *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante. Festschrift für Peter W. Haider zum 60. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 2006, in press).

<sup>42</sup> Dirven, o.c. [n.35], p.260-72.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p.194: “it is precisely because these people became integrated into the religion of their surroundings that such cases are bound to escape our notice.”

in the Roman world that Palmyrene expatriates could indeed integrate well in local society. The lack of hard evidence at Dura-Europos, or rather our inability to interpret it correctly, can be explained quite simply. In Roman Dacia, for example, Palmyrenes were actively involved in the running of the towns in which they eventually settled after retirement from military service. And often they set up inscriptions in Latin which did not mention their ancestral gods (although there are of course examples for this too). However, in Sarmizegetusa and the other Dacian towns where Palmyrene *numeri* played a prominent role in the policing of the Roman province, Palmyrenes were instantly recognizable through their nomenclature.<sup>44</sup> It would be a surprise indeed if the large contingent of their compatriots at Dura-Europos had not similarly produced any town councillors or other civic magistrates, who set up inscriptions in Greek with no reference to their ancestral deities. As regards Dura, however, it is often impossible to decide whether a Semitic name known through its transliteration in a Greek inscription was actually that of a Palmyrene, rather than of an indigenous Durene or of an inhabitant of one of the villages along the Middle Euphrates, unless there is additional information to corroborate a transliterated Semitic name in order to identify the respective person positively as a Palmyrene. The fact that those in possession of Roman citizenship (not of course soldiers from the auxiliary unit) will have been able to sport their *tria nomina*, occasionally as an alternative for the indigenous nomenclature which they could preserve, makes it even harder to decide unequivocally how worshippers ought to be defined and how they would have identified themselves under different circumstances.<sup>45</sup> Since Greek is, together with Palmyrenean Aramaic, one of the two ‘Palmyrene languages’ (and often used as the single language in inscriptions set up in the Syrian oasis itself), these postulated invisible Palmyrenes at Dura-Europos cannot be said to have acted contrary to the epigraphic habits of their hometown: they just did not make any attempt to emphasize their distinctive status as

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<sup>44</sup> L. Bianchi, ‘I Palmireni in Dacia: comunità e tradizioni religiose’ in *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 5 (3<sup>rd</sup> ser.) (1987), p.87-95; S. Sanie, ‘Die syrischen und palmyrenischen Kulte im römischen Dakien’ in *ANRW II* 18.2 (1989), p.1165-1271; T. Kaizer, ‘Latin-Palmyrenean inscriptions in the Museum of Banat at Timișoara’ in C. Găzdac e.a. (eds.), *Orbis Antiquus. Studia in honorem Ioannis Pisonis* (Cluj-Napoca, 2004), p.565-9.

<sup>45</sup> On questions of nomenclature and identity at Dura-Europos, see now M. Sommer, ‘A map of meaning. Approaching cultural identities at the Middle Euphrates (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD)’ in *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 27 (2004), p.153-83; id., ‘Dura-Europos ed il medio Eufrate. Osservazioni su diaspora e costruzioni di identità culturali nella Mesopotamia parto-romana’ in *Mediterraneo Antico* 7 (2004), p.837-57.

Palmyrenes. But neither did they necessarily hide it.

As regards the Palmyrenean inscriptions from Dura-Europos, they are sometimes bilingual with Greek, like in Palmyra itself.<sup>46</sup> In the case of one graffito a Palmyrenean text is transcribed in Greek characters, possibly recording an instruction to adorn a divine image with two golden objects according to the religious calendar (θαροθην γοβνιν δααβαι(ι) βιδ σαλμα βα Νισαν αα Βαρζακιη).<sup>47</sup> Recent studies have shown that, although there are indeed a number of examples to the contrary, in most bilingual inscriptions the two languages employed are composed more or less independently. Only seldom is it clear that one is a direct translation from the other.<sup>48</sup> But where in Palmyra itself bilingual inscriptions appear less frequent in the religious sphere than for example in honorific contexts, at Dura the few bilinguals we have (outnumbered as they are though by the Palmyrenean texts) are all relating to cultic issues. Here in Dura, as elsewhere abroad, bilingual inscriptions may have had different functions than in the hometown, although – in addition to context and target audience – personal choice on the part of the dedicant will have been the key element to decide which language(s) to use. Each different language, with its own idiom, could contribute to emphasize, or even transform, specific aspects of a cultic system. Palmyrenean, like Imperial Aramaic, only sporadically expressed explicitly that a vow or a divine injunction was the reason behind a dedication. Instead, in Palmyra it was the dedicant's gratitude which was emphasized, both in Aramaic and in Greek. But in Dura-Europos, a military tribune with a Roman name transliterated in Greek (Σκειβώνιος Μουκιανὸς χιλίαρχος) erected an altar in the so-called temple 'of the Palmyrene gods' to the Palmyrene deity Yarhibol, following

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<sup>46</sup> Originally published by R. du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions palmyréniennes de Dura-Europos* (Paris, 1939), they were included in *PAT* 1067-1121, and commented upon by Dirven, o.c. [n.35], in the appendix.

<sup>47</sup> *PAT* 1117, with Dirven, o.c. [n.35], p.310-1, for different interpretations.

<sup>48</sup> Palmyrene bilingualism is discussed by D.G.K. Taylor, 'Bilingualism and diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia' in J.N. Adams, M. Janse and S.C.R. Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Word* (Oxford, 2002), p.298-331, esp. p.317-24; J.-B. Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre* (Beirut, 2002), p.23-36; T. Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra* (Stuttgart, 2002), p.27-34; and H. Gzella, 'Die Palmyrener in der griechisch-römischen Welt: kulturelle Begegnung im Spiegel des Sprachkontaktes' in *Klio* 87 (2005), p.445-58. On the relation between Palmyrenean and Latin, see especially the relevant sections in the magisterial study by J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003), p.248-64.

the latter's command (κατὰ κέλευσιν).<sup>49</sup> Without willing to press the point too far, the use of different languages may have affected how certain religious aspects were expressed or emphasized in different situations.<sup>50</sup> These same patterns are also visible in the bilingual inscription on a slightly damaged relief of Nemesis, found at the so-called Palmyrene gate. One of the few Palmyrenean-Greek texts from Dura-Europos, it records a dedication to this Classical goddess:<sup>51</sup>

Θεᾷ Νεμέσι Ιούλιος Αὐρήλιος Μαλωχὰς  
Σουδαίου Παλμυρηνὸς εὐξάμενος ἀνέθηκεν

**Translation:** Julius Aurelius Malochas, son of Soudaios, Palmyrene, set this up in gratitude to the goddess Nemesis.

'bd wmw'd' mlwk' br šwdy tdmry' lnmssys  
šnt 556

**Translation:** Maloka son of Shudai, Palmyrene, made (this), and with gratitude, for Nemesis. The year 556 (AD 244-5).

The dedicant shows his *tria nomina* only in the Greek part, but emphasizes his status as a Palmyrene both in Greek and in Palmyrenean. As regards the goddess, she is depicted on the relief with her standard attributes according to Classical iconography, measuring rod, wheel and griffin, while she pulls her veil downwards in an apotropaic gesture. Although she did receive some worship in Palmyrene contexts, there is hardly any evidence save a few *tesserae* for the presence of her cult in Palmyra itself.<sup>52</sup> In contrast to the common Palmyrene practice, which had most deities keeping their indigenous, non-Classical names not only in Palmyrenean, but also in Greek (or, in Africa and Dacia, Latin) transliteration, the divine name Nemesis is the only instance of the exact opposite: *nmsys*

<sup>49</sup> *Rep.* II, p.90 n°3.

<sup>50</sup> T. Kaizer, 'Religious mentality in Palmyrene documents' in *Klio* 86 (2004), p.165-84, esp. p.180-3.

<sup>51</sup> *PAT* 1078. The relief is Dirven, o.c. [n.35], pl.XVI, with discussion at p.327-31.

<sup>52</sup> For a general discussion of the Palmyrene cult of Nemesis, with further references, see T. Kaizer, 'Nemesis, Aglibol and Malakbel: a note on a relief from Khirbet Ramadan in the Palmyrène' in *Parthica* 3 (2001), p.211-8.

is the Aramaic transliteration of the Greek name. Whether that means that she therefore automatically continued to be conceived of as a ‘Greek import’ in the religious world of the Palmyrenes is another matter: important evidence for her cult comes also from the Palmyrene countryside, an area generally understood to have undergone a low degree of Classical influences. In the Greek town of Dura-Europos, her well known iconography would have made the goddess on the relief immediately recognisable. The fact that the dedicant added a bilingual inscription says therefore more about himself than about Nemesis. But the transliteration of the divine name in Palmyrenean certainly helped to make her a ‘Palmyrene’ goddess too.

How different, then, is the situation with regard to Hatrenes at Dura-Europos. Firstly, the evidence is of course extremely limited,<sup>53</sup> so much so that it is usually overlooked in the context of religion at Dura. Two of the four ‘texts’ are nothing but a personal name, one (originally interpreted as a Safaitic graffito) inscribed in the Palmyrene gate and one found in the surroundings of the temple of Aphlad. But the other two are more interesting. Firstly, there is a graffito scratched on the wall of a house, and containing the divine names of the members of the triad of Hatra, consisting of Maren, Marten and Bar-Maren, ‘Our Lord, Our Lady and the Son of Our Lord and Our Lady’.<sup>54</sup> This divine family takes first place in the inscriptions from Hatra itself, all of them written in the local Aramaic dialect, and is worshipped both in the temples inside the central temple complex and in most of the minor shrines spread throughout that city.<sup>55</sup> But whereas in Hatra Greek is as good as absent,<sup>56</sup> the Hatrean mention of the triad in Dura-Europos is accompanied by a Greek graffito which seems to give the transliteration of the divine names (Μαρεῖνος [twice mentioned], Μαῤ[θαν] or Μαῤι[θ]εν [according to different readings], and Μαῤῖνος υἱ[ὸς αὐτῶν]). Secondly, the above-mentioned bilingual inscription from the temple of Atargatis records both in Hatrean and

<sup>53</sup> Bertolino, o.c. [n.20], p.199-206. Cf. P. Leriche and R. Bertolino, ‘Les inscriptions hatréennes de Dura-Europos: le contexte archéologique et historique’ in *DEÉ* IV, p.207-14.

<sup>54</sup> Bertolino, o.c. [n.20], n°1; Originally published by Cumont, o.c. [n.12], p.447-9, n°s129-30. Cf. J.T. Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l’époque romaine* (Paris, 1972), p.334-7.

<sup>55</sup> T. Kaizer, ‘Some remarks about the religious life of Hatra’ in *Topoi* 10 (2000), passim.

<sup>56</sup> With the exception of Greek graffiti from the area of the north gate and a heavily damaged bilingual Greek-Hatrean inscription, all of which at present remain unfortunately unpublished.

in Greek a gift of money to the Sun god (*lšmš 'lh 'θεῶν Ἡλίου*).<sup>57</sup> Again, Greek is added to Hatrean in order to make one of the most important deities of Hatra accessible to the inhabitants of Dura-Europos: whereas the triad is most often mentioned in Hatrean inscriptions, the city of Hatra was believed to have been under the direct protection of the Sun god Shamash.<sup>58</sup> The financial contribution that the dedicant of the bilingual inscription had made to Shamash could well refer to money given to the large temple complex in Hatra, where this was a common practice to commemorate.<sup>59</sup> According to this interpretation (which can of course not be proven), the dedicant was apparently unable to set up an inscription in his hometown, and chose to do so instead in Dura-Europos, where he was either residing or passing through. In default of a proper temple of the Sun at Dura-Europos, he placed a record of his pious donation in one of the town's many local shrines. We should probably not make too much of the fact that it ended up in the temple of Atargatis, but it shows nicely an often ignored aspect of the polytheistic world of the Classical Levant, where in most sanctuaries various deities could receive a cult, partly at the whim of those who chose to worship them.<sup>60</sup> For obvious reasons, the dedicant from Hatra opted to add a Greek counterpart to his local Aramaic dialect: whereas a Palmyrenean inscription could be read by other Palmyrenes, there is no evidence for a large community of Hatrenes in the town. Whether the record of his gift in the temple of Atargatis actually served to enhance the divine world of Dura-Europos as such is another matter.

Even more scanty is the Safaitic evidence from the town. Whereas at Palmyra (unpublished) Safaitic graffiti were inscribed in the temple of the goddess Allat,<sup>61</sup> those few ones from Dura save one come from the Palmyrene gate. The one exception was found in the surroundings of the temple of Aphlad, so it is worth quoting Macdonald's translation of it: 'by *S*<sup>2</sup>'*m* son of *Bgd* of the lineage of *M'gm*', and he longed for *Hdt* and

<sup>57</sup> Bertolino, o.c. [n.20], n°4. See above, n.20.

<sup>58</sup> Cassius Dio states (LXVIII 31,2) that the Sun god, to whom the city was consecrated (τοῦ Ἡλίου ῥέειν πλου καὶ ἀνέκεται), helped to protect Hatra when she was under siege. See Kaizer, o.c. [n.55], p.232-5, for further references.

<sup>59</sup> Hatra inscriptions n°s 191, 202q, 225, 240, 244-6, for which see Beyer, o.c. [n.28], *ad loc.*

<sup>60</sup> Note also the above-mentioned stele with its abstract lunar and solar symbolism, accompanied by an inscription written in Classical Syriac, which was also found in the temple of Atargatis. See above, n.14.

<sup>61</sup> H.J.W. Drijvers, 'Das Heiligtum der arabischen Göttin Allât im westlichen Stadtteil von Palmyra' in *Antike Welt* 7.3 (1976), p.34.

for *Gbt* of the patrol of *N'm.*<sup>62</sup> Although it is the longest and most interesting Safaitic text found at Dura, it can hardly be said to add to our understanding of religious life in the fortress. Instead, one may safely assume that those responsible for the Safaitic inscriptions paid homage to the gods they were used to according to the thousands of graffiti found in the basalt deserts of southern Syria and northern Jordan. Evidence from Dura-Europos itself, however, is lacking.

'Dura-Europos' is a modernism. Our evidence refers to the town either as Europos, the name of the Macedonian colony, or as Dura, its indigenous name. The names of the site are of some relevance for its religious life, since we have references in both Latin, Greek and Palmyrenean to a deity who served as its divine city protector. The first of those is a Palmyrenean inscription dated to AD 159, on a relief from the so-called temple of the Gadde, showing a bearded god, seated between two eagles, who is identified as the 'Gad of Dura' (*gd' dy dwr*). He is crowned by Dura's legendary founder Seleucus Nicator, also identified in Palmyrenean (*slwqws nyqt□wr*).<sup>63</sup> Aramaic 'Gad' is the equivalent of Greek *Tyche*, and matches it above all in its capacity as protector of a city.<sup>64</sup> However, whereas the companion relief from the temple of the Gadde shows the 'Gad of Tadmor' (the indigenous name of Palmyra) in the form of a traditional Greek city goddess, seated on a throne alongside a lion, wearing a mural crown and with one foot on the representation of the city's river (or spring, in the case of Palmyra),<sup>65</sup> it is clear that the 'Gad of Dura' does not follow the Classical scheme. This Classical scheme *is*, however, followed for the iconographical representation of Dura's Tyche on the above-mentioned fresco of the sacrifice by the Palmyrene tribune Iulius Terentius, from the temple of the Palmyrene gods, which dates to the 230s.<sup>66</sup> At the left bottom of the painting, under the three gods who are the recipients of the sacrifice by Terentius and his soldiers, two city protectresses with *corona muralis* are seated, labelled in Greek paint as the Τύχη Παλμύρων and the Τύχη Δούρας. Interestingly, whereas the Greek

<sup>62</sup> Macdonald, o.c. [n.21], p.123-6.

<sup>63</sup> PAT 1094, with *Rep.* VII/VIII, pl.XXXIII. Cf. Dirven, o.c. [n.35], p.230 and p.245-7, with pl.III.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. T. Kaizer, 'De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque. A study of the variety of appearances of *Gad* in Aramaic inscriptions and on sculptures from the Near East in the first three centuries AD' in *OLP* 28 (1997), p.147-66, and 29 (1998), p.33-62; N. Belayche, 'Tyche et la Tyche dans les cités de la Palestine romaine' in *Syria* 80 (2003), p.111-38.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Dirven, o.c. [n.35], p.231 and p.247-53, with pl.IV.

<sup>66</sup> See above, n.41.



counterpart of the ‘Gad of Tadmor’ is named after the Greek name of that city, Palmyra, the ‘Gad of Dura’ – despite changing sex – has its opposite number in the ‘Tyche of Dura’, *not* in a ‘Tyche of Europos’. Indeed, the indigenous name of the town is even used in the Latin variant to the theme, in a late second-century inscription on an altar found in one of the city gates, which records how two veterans of the *Cohors II Ulpiae Paphlagonum Commodianae* redeemed their vows to the ‘Genius of Dura’ (*Genio Dura*).<sup>67</sup> It is of course more than likely that the descendants of the original Macedonian settlers would have referred to the divine protectress of their town as the ‘Tyche of Europos’, but there is no evidence for this. The fact remains that Palmyrenes, whether writing for their own community in Palmyrenean in the mid-second century, or for a wider (military) audience in Greek in the early third, chose to identify this deity as looking after ‘Dura’, and so did veterans from a non-Palmyrene unit when writing in Latin in the late-second century. This may be relevant for our understanding of the impact of the official civic cults of Dura-Europos on other patterns of worship in the town. On the one hand, these inscriptions match the assumption that ‘Dura’ became more in vogue from the end of the second century AD.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, not only had ‘Europos’ been the official designation since the days of its foundation and long after – the town was for example referred to in AD 134 in a Greek papyrus recording a loan as ‘Europos towards Arabia’<sup>69</sup> (ἐν Εὐρώπῳ τῇ πρὸς Ἀραβίᾳ) – but, in a process of highlighting the fortress’ Macedonian origins, official documents could, as late as AD 254, when it had become a Roman *colonia*, refer to it as the ‘colony of the Europeans of Seleukos Nikator’ (κωλονεῖα Εὐρωπαίων Σελεύκου Νεικάτορος).<sup>70</sup>

That the Macedonian colony Europos was founded at a site which had been called Dura (‘fortress’) since time immemorial is clear from an Old-Babylonian tablet, which was reused in the wall of the temple of Atargatis, and which contains the indigenous

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<sup>67</sup> *Rep.* I, p.42.

<sup>68</sup> Scholten, o.c. [n.24], p.21. Note that Macdonald, o.c. [n.21], p.119-21, reads ‘Dura’ as the town’s name in a Safaitic inscription: ‘(written) by G<sub>tm</sub>’ at Dūrā’ (*lgtm’ b-dwry*). Unfortunately, the Safaitic inscriptions cannot be dated precisely.

<sup>69</sup> Welles, Fink and Gilliam, o.c. [n.5], n°22.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, n°32., an act of divorce written for a soldier of the *Legio IV Scythica*. Referred to by Welles, o.c. [n.4], p.53, as an “archaizing revival”.

name of the town (*Da-ma-ra*, pronounced as *Da-wa-ra*).<sup>71</sup> The fact that this document, which clearly had lost all its relevance by the time it was reused, is the only trace of cuneiform at Dura-Europos, raises the issue of the absence of Akkadian in this small town on the borders of Mesopotamia. In a way, this is not surprising at all, as Akkadian is equally not attested in Palmyra, some of whose major cults originated in a Mesopotamian sphere of influence, nor even at Hatra, a city where the great temple was named after the famous Esangila temple of Marduk in Babylon.<sup>72</sup> But in Babylon itself the language is still attested in the second half of the first century AD, on astronomical tablets, and it has even been argued, rather provocatively, that cuneiform did not die out in the Near East until the third century.<sup>73</sup> As far as the evidence is concerned, however, Akkadian was not in use in Dura, even if at least some of the town's priests were depicted on frescos as wearing long white dresses and conical headgear, in typically Oriental fashion. But many other languages and dialects were, in a multifarious cultic landscape, and this (combined with the site's state of preservation), makes Dura-Europos our best test case for the study of cultural and linguistic developments in the Classical Levant outside the larger cities.

Throughout its history, Dura-Europos saw a notable growth in cosmopolitan cultural and religious elements, especially in the Roman period, when they followed in the tracks of the imperial divisions. But only seldom did this result in what could properly be called the mixed culture of a Graeco-Semitic civilization. The use of Palmyrenean and Latin, though well attested, remained restricted to specific sections of the population, with only Greek functioning as the veritable *lingua franca* of the town. Whether Greek

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<sup>71</sup> Published with commentary by F.J. Stephens, 'A cuneiform tablet from Dura-Europas' in *Revue d'Assyriologie* 34 (1937), p.183-90.

<sup>72</sup> Kaizer, o.c. [n.55], p.235.

<sup>73</sup> M.J. Geller, 'The last wedge' in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 87 (1997), p.43-95. Not all the evidence, however, is unequivocal. The author of the now lost Greek novel *Babyloniaka*, known to us as Iamblichus – who according to his own account (as paraphrased by Photius in the *Bibliotheka* 94) lived and wrote in the second half of the second century – is said to have been a Babylonian who studied magical arts and also had a Greek education. But according to a *scholion* written by the tenth-century scribe of the oldest manuscript of Photius' *Bibliotheka*, possibly reflecting a more scrutinised and hence trustworthy reading of the original novel than that by the ninth-century scholar himself, Iamblichus was a native Syrian familiar with his indigenous language, until a Babylonian tutor taught him 'the Babylonian language, customs and stories' (Βαβυλωνίαν τε γλῶσσαν καὶ ἥθη λόγους). Considering that the *Babyloniaka*, although set in a Near Eastern context, is first and foremost a Greek novel, it is not certain that we may take the autobiographical details of its author at face value, rather than interpreting them as part of the literary construction. The *scholion*'s historicity is called into question by Millar, o.c. [n.13], p.489-91, but accepted by Geller, o.c., p.50 (both quoting the scholiast's note in full).

language and culture was, therefore, nothing but a superficial veneer, or, in contrast, indeed provided a common link to the various sanctuaries and their cults, must remain open to debate. But it could certainly be argued from the available evidence that different cultic practices continued to take place more or less independently, in different parallel religious universes so to speak. This will have been, at least partly, due to the absence of a central temple complex which could have served to unite more intensively the various sectors of society on a religious level. Where the temple of Bel at Palmyra was also known by its citizens as the ‘house of their gods’,<sup>74</sup> and where the sanctuaries situated within the enormous temenos in the middle of Hatra functioned as a religious focal point for the inhabitants of the city and its surroundings as a whole,<sup>75</sup> patterns of worship which could be called ‘civic’ are much harder to distinguish at Dura-Europos (in any case as far as its religious topography is concerned), though that is not to say that religious life in the Euphrates fortress was of an exclusive character.<sup>76</sup> First and foremost, the traditional polytheistic divine world of Dura-Europos, whether Classical or indigenous, found expression in Greek, and it is that dominance of Greek in public and religious inscriptions that makes the town at the same time representative for the Roman Near East as a whole.

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<sup>74</sup> E.g. *PAT* 0269 and 1353, with Kaizer, o.c. [n.48], p.67-79.

<sup>75</sup> Id., o.c. [n.55], esp. p.231 and p.236-9.

<sup>76</sup> Id., ‘Patterns of worship in Dura-Europos: a case study of religious life in the Classical Levant outside the main cult centres’ (forthcoming). Note, however, that Dirven, o.c. [n.35], p.121-2, referred to the temple of Zeus Megistos as a “major civic shrine”.